

is going on. I know that there are people that are spending a tremendous amount of time talking to one another and attempting to work together. Senator Rasmussen got a bill passed last year dealing with services to preschool handicapped students. And that's a process that is working forward. But we still seem to be struggling with this breaking down barriers of agencies protecting turf, and have not really gotten to this area of serving the needs of children. And I hope, Senator Bernard-Stevens, that your bill and your amendment will be a breakthrough in this area. But I'm frustrated with the delays that have continued to occur in this area. I'm going to be supporting this amendment,...

SPEAKER BAACK: One minute.

SENATOR WITHEM: ...because it seems to be the only direction we can go in this year with limited budgets and limited supplies, and the fact that the agencies still aren't quite ready to do what needs to be done. But I hope that this will be the effort that actually brings some fruition to this area. Thank you.

SPEAKER BAACK: Thank you, Senator Withem. On the amendment to the amendment, Senator Rasmussen.

SENATOR RASMUSSEN: Yes, Mr. Speaker, members of the body, I rise in support of this amendment, too. I would echo what Senator Withem is saying. It is a starting point, not the ending. And I...I welcome that we are beginning to take a look at the fact that many issues related to children and juveniles are not being addressed in this state. Last year we passed LB 638, which was an effort to look at the process of placing children outside of the home, particularly outside of the state. And we pulled together a committee there that is interagency, represented by the directors of a variety of agencies. It becomes very clear that we have many, many agencies who have a piece of the action in terms of serving children and adolescents in this state. But because there is no single, unified focus on those issues, often times they are not addressed as well as they should be. It is painfully clear that we are extremely...I don't know what the word is here, we...we don't have near the services that we need to have for children and adolescents, particularly in the mental health area. This is a real strong starting point for us in terms of pulling together all those people who have a piece of the pie, in a way that's going to work better for our children, and I urge you to support it.